DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 307 997 PS 018 063

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TITLE A Comparison of Child-Rearing Practices among Chinese, Immigrant-Chinese and Caucasian-American Parents.
PUB DATE Apr 89
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (Kansas City, MO, April 27-30, 1989).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Achievement; Affective Behavior; *Child Rearing; *Chinese Americans; Comparative Analysis; Ethnic Groups; Foreign Countries; *Socialization; *Whites
IDENTIFIERS *Chinese People; *Cultural Change; Independent Behavior; Taiwan

ABSTRACT

Differences and similarities in child rearing practices among Chinese, immigrant Chinese, and Caucasian American parents were investigated. Subjects were mothers and fathers of 138 kindergarteners and first and second graders in Taiwan and the U.S. The child rearing variables of parental control, encouragement of independence, expression of affection, and emphasis on achievement were studied. MANOVA yielded a significant group effect on parental variables. Chinese and immigrant Chinese parents tended to have higher ratings than Caucasian American parents on parental control and emphasis on achievement. However, both groups of Chinese parents had higher ratings on encouragement of independence than did Caucasian American parents, with the ratings of the fathers of Chinese origin higher than those of their Caucasian American counterparts. Results suggest that patterns of child rearing are undergoing a change among parents of Chinese origin in this sample. Four figures and one table are included. (RH)

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A COMPARISON OF CHILD-REARING PRACTICES AMONG CHINESE, IMMIGRANT-CHINESE AND CAUCASIAN-AMERICAN PARENTS

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Running Head: Child-Rearing Practices

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Abstract

This study investigated the differences and similarities in child-rearing practices among Chinese, immigrant-Chinese, and Caucasin-American parents. The subjects of this study were the mothers and fathers of 138 children enrolled in kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade in Taiwan and the United States. The child-rearing variables under study were: parental control, encouragement of independence, expression of affection, and emphasis on achievement. MANOVA yielded significant group effect on the parental variables. It was found that Chinese and immigrant-Chinese parents tended to rate higher on parental control, encouragement of independence, and emphasis on achievement than Caucasian-American parents. The adaptability of the immigrant-Chinese to the conditions of life and social structures of the United States, while maintaining traditional patterns of socialization is discussed.

A Comparison of Child-Rearing Practices Among Chinese, Immigrant-Chinese and Caucasian-American Parents

There is a paucity of studies of parent-child relationships in non-western societies, and cultural variations among American families (Staples & Mirande, 1980). Knowledge about child-rearing values, attitudes and behaviors among Chinese parents in the United States is limited. Recent studies of Chinese and Janapense children have focused mainly on parental influence on their academic achievement (Sigel, 1989). Thus there is a need to understand child-rearing practices among parents of Chinese origin and Caucasian-American parents in the United States. Results of such studies could provide additional knowledge about patterns of socialization among immigrants who have to accommodate to the social expectations of both their culture of origin and that of their culture of relocation.

Although there is a lack of "an explicit conceptualization of the significance of child rearing to personality development" (Ho, 1981, p. 82) in Chinese society; philosophical perspectives and general knowledge of Chinese families are found in the literature (Hsu, 1981; Chao, 1983; Lang, 1949). In order to understand the socialization process in the Chinese family, there is a need to explore the significant impact of Confucian principles on family interactions and relationships (Chao, 1983; Ho, 1981; Hsu, 1981; King & Bond, 1985; Lang, 1946; Wu & Tseng, 1985). Definitive views on parental control, obedience, strict discipline, emphasis on education, filial piety, respect for elders, family obligations, reverence for tradition, maintenance

of harmony and negation of conflict are attributed to the influence of Confucianism (Chao, 1983; Glenn, 1983; Ho, 1981). In Chinese society the term chiao-yang is the most frequently used term in child rearing, with chiao (education) being emphasized more than yang (rearing). Chiao, the "proper development of character" (Ho, 1981, p. 82) and chiao-yu, formal education are the main concerns in child-rearing. Furthermore, beliefs in human malleability, effort, self-improvement, and deference to groups have instilled in the children a belief system that focuses on internal goals (Chen & Uttal, 1988). Thus children are socialized to function in their particular environments and to the belief that change is possible and is within an individual's own control.

Sigel (1988) has noted that there is no comparative studies of cultural variations among Asian groups in the types of parental behaviors, beliefs and values that are placed on childrearing. Hence, in examining patterns of childrearing one must not generalize across cultural groups.

Variations in child-rearing practice between the Chinese and American cultures are assumed to be derived in part from the different values and traditions placed on the family and on parent-child relationships (Chao, 1983; Glenn, 1983). However, few empirical studies have examined this point of view. A comparative review of the four child-rearing practices examined in this study among American parents and parents of Chinese origin follows:

1. Chinese parents tend to control their children more than American parents. In the Chinese tradition, the concepts of parental authority and filial pity, and the Confucian dictum that "parents are always right" influence parental control and discipline of children (Hsu, 1981; Chao, 1983).

2. Chinese parents tend to be less expressive of their affection than American parents. Traditionally, the Chinese emphasize family harmony through emotional restraint (Bond & Wong, 1983). Chinese parents, especially fathers, are less emotionally expressive and less emtionally involved with their children than American fathers (Hsu, 1981).

3. Chinese parents are less likely to encourage independence than American parents. Traditionally, in Chinese society the child is socialized to learn his 'place' in the social order (Ho, 1981, p. 86). American parents tend to encourage independence or individualism more than Chinese parents (King & Bond, 1985).

4. Chinese parents emphasize the value of academic achievement more than American parents. Collectivism and group identification also contribute to a child's achievement; i.e., it is a reflection of the entire family or community (Sigel, 1988, p. 354; Ho, 1981). There is a strong Chinese tradition based on the pronouncements of Confucius, "that original human nature is closely alike, but that its development varies widely with experience" (cited in Ho, 1981). Chinese parents in child-rearing place great importance on academic achievement as a means to acquire personal advancement, higher social status, wealth and

respect in the Chinese society; and as a means of overcoming discrimination and gaining opportunities in the United States (Lum & Char, 1985).

In view of the above review and considerations, the present study examined the following question about child-rearing practices among Chinese, immigrant-Chinese, and Caucasian-American parents: How do these groups differ in parental control, open expression of affection, encouragement of independence, and emphasis on achievement?

Method

Subjects

The subjects were the mothers and fathers of 138 children (67 girls and 71 boys), from intact families in Taiwan and the United States. The average ages of the Chinese, immigrant-Chinese, and Caucasian-American children were 6-2, 7-1 and 6-4 respectively. The 44 Chinese parents, of 22 boys and 22 girls, were from Taipei and Shin-Ju in Taiwan; the 46 immigrant-Chinese parents, of 27 boys and 19 girls, were from Baltimore, MD, Washington, DC, and Richmond, VA; and the 48 Caucasian-American parents, of 22 boys and 26 girls, were from Blacksburg, VA. The Chinese and immigrant-Chinese were from metropolitan areas, whereas, the Caucasian-Americans are from a univeristy town. With few exceptions these parents were from middle class families in their respective communities. The immigrant-Chinese parents originally were from Taiwan and their children were the first generation born in the United States.

Measures

Four factors (28 items) from the Child-Rearing Practices Report (CRPR) (Block, 1986) were used in this study: Parental control, encouragement of independence, expression of affection, and emphasis on achievement. The original CRPR was modified in order to facilitate data collection. Instead of using the Q-sort format, each item was rated on a 5-point Likert type scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagrees to 5 = strongly agree. In the questionnaire the 28 CRPR items were randomly ordered. The CRPR has been translated in several languages including Chinese. The Chinese version, obtained from Block (1986), was used with the couples of Taiwan; while both English and Chinese versions were available to the immigrant-Chinese couples.

Procedure

The subjects were instructed to complete the questionnaire individually without discussing it with their spouses. The completed questionnaires were returned in sealed envelopes to the researchers.

Results

A two-way-MANOVA 3 (ethnic group) x 2 (sex) was used to analyze the eight fathers' and mothers' child-rearing variables: parental control, expression of affection, encouragement of independence, and emphasis on achievement. The multivariate test yielded a significant ethnic group effect on the parental variables, $F(16, 150) = 10.31$, $p < .0001$. Means and standard deviations of the dependent variables are reported in Table 1 (see Table 1). Univariate ANOVAs were used to determine

Insert Table 1 about here

which parental variables contributed to group differences. Significant results were found for fathers on parental control, F (2, 132) = 26.20, $p < .0001$; encouragement of independence, F (2, 132) = 9.17, $p < .0002$. Significant results were also found for mothers and parental control, F (2, 132) = 54.54, $p < .0001$; encouragement of independence, F (2, 132) = 11.17, $p < .0001$; and emphasis on achievement, F (2, 132) = 24.36, $p < .0001$.

Post-hoc Tukey tests for ethnic group differences in child-rearing yielded significant results ($p < .05$) in 13 pair-wise comparisons of the six dependent means. Parents of Chinese origin and Caucasian-American parents differed in their ratings on parental control, encouragement of independence, and emphasis on achievement. Both Chinese and immigrant-Chinese fathers tended to have higher ratings on parental control, encouragement of independence, and emphasis on achievement than Caucasian-American fathers. Similarly, Chinese mothers tended to score higher than Caucasian-American mothers on these same variables. Immigrant-Chinese mothers had higher parental control and emphasis on achievement scores than Caucasian-American mothers. Chinese mothers in Taiwan had higher parental control and encouragement of independence ratings than immigrant-Chinese mothers in the United States.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicated cultural variations in child-rearing practices among Chinese, immigrant-Chinese and Caucasian-American parents. Consistent with the literature, Chinese and immigrant-Chinese parents tended to have higher ratings than Caucasian-American parents on parental control and emphasis on achievement (Chao, 1983; Hsu, 1985; Wolf, 1970; Wu, 1985; Yao, 1979; Young, 1972). However, contrary to the literature, both groups of Chinese parents had higher ratings on encouragement of independence than the Caucasian-American parents; with the ratings of the fathers of Chinese origin higher than those of their Caucasian-American counterparts. While the Chinese mothers rated higher than immigrant-Chinese mothers on parental control and encouragement of independence; no significant differences were found between the ratings of their husbands. No difference was found among these groups on open expression of affection.

The higher ratings on parental control and emphasis on achievement among parents of Chinese origin seem to confirm the position that traditional cultural values and practices still have an important influence on Chinese child-rearing practices, in spite of rapid social and political changes (Ho, 1981), or relocation to another country. On parental control, the ratings were highest among the Chinese mothers, lowest among the Caucasian-American mothers, with the ratings of the immigrant-Chinese mothers in the middle. This finding is suggestive of a gradual change among immigrant mothers due to acculturation,

i.e., they could be in the process of adjusting and accommodating to the values and practices of the United States.

The higher ratings on encouragement of independence among these parents of Chinese origin than their Caucasian counterparts warrant further exploration. One possible explanation could be made based on the assumption that independence is a pre-requisite to achievement. If this assumption is valid, then parental encouragement of independence should correlate with emphasis on achievement. To explore the validity of this assumption, correlation coefficients between emphasis on achievement and encouragement of independence for each parent group are presented as follows: (a) among Chinese fathers, $r = .64$, $p < .0001$; (b) among Chinese mothers, $r = .33$, $p < .03$; (c) among immigrant-Chinese fathers, $r = .66$, $p < .0001$; (d) among immigrant-Chinese mothers, $r = .41$, $p < .005$; (e) among Caucasian-American fathers, $r = .35$, $p < .02$; and (f) among Caucasian-American mothers, $r = .21$, $p < .15$. Moderately positive relationships between these two variables are noted among parents of Chinese origin. Thus it seems that parents of Chinese origin, especially fathers, tend to encourage their children to be independent and to achieve. One needs to be both independent and adaptable in order to adjust to the changing demands of society. This assumption is congruent with the Chinese beliefs about human malleability and that achievement is within one's own control (Chen & Uttel, 1988). An illustration of such adaptability is reported in a historical analysis of the changing structure of Chinese-American families in the United

States. The findings suggests that the Chinese-Americans often employ strategies characterized as "products of Chinese culture" in their efforts to maintain family life while adapting to the demands of the changing social structure (p. 35, Glenn, 1983). The relationships between child-rearing, achievement and independence need further investigation from a bi-cultural perspective.

A distinction should also be made between family interdependence and individual independence. Although the Chinese value family interdependence and minimize the development of individuality within the family (Ho, 1981; Hsu, 1985; King & Bond, 1985), individual independence is not necessarily discouraged. An assumption could be made that Chinese parents might promote interdependence (cohesion) within the family, while encourage the development of individual independence. In this way, their children would be prepared to function adequately in the larger society. From a traditional socialization perspective, not being able to succeed or function in the society at large could bring disgrace to the Chinese family; while being successful could be seen as a means of fulfilling one's filial obligations. The finding is also supportive of the assumption made by Chen and Uttal (1988) that although the Chinese value system promotes deference to the group it also believes in personal control in the fulfillment of internal goals. In this respect, personal control is an element of independence. Future studies should explore the interrelationship between family

interdependence (cohesion) and individual independence from a bi-cultural perspective in order to clarify the above assumption.

Ethnic differences in the perception and evaluation of affective expression could have contributed to a lack of differences in the ratings of these parent groups. On the other hand, this finding could also be indicative of an observed trend that Chinese parents are becoming less reserved and are gradually moving away from traditional child-rearing orientation (Ho & Kang, 1984).

In sum, the results of the present study suggests that patterns of child-rearing are undergoing a change among this sample of parents of Chinese origin. The Chinese and immigrant-Chinese parents are also seemingly adapting to the necessary changes, while holding on to certain traditional family values. Traditional values and practices that are deeply rooted in the Confucian principles, still seem to have a great deal of influence on their child-rearing practices. These values could possibly facilitate "bi-cultural" socialization so that these immigrant children would be able to function effectively in both the sub-culture of the immigrant-Chinese and the culture of the society at large.

In conclusion, it is suggested that in cross-cultural studies of child-rearing it is necessary to take into account the traditional cultural values and attitudes particular to each of the groups under investigation; as well as the values, attitude and conventions of the cultural environments in which they currently reside. It is also necessary to recognize the

interactions among various social institutions and their impact on parental child-rearing practices. In doing so, we may better understand the consequences of culture differences and similiarities in child-rearing.

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Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for Child-rearing Variables by Ethnic Groups and Parent Groups

Group	Father				Mother			
	Cont	Aff	Indp	Achv	Cont	Aff	Indp	Achv
Overall (n= 138)								
M	3.02	4.38	4.01	4.16	2.92	4.53	4.12	4.08
SD	.68	.54	.65	.60	.65	.38	.49	.55
Chinese (n= 44)								
M	3.37	4.30	4.26	4.36	3.40	4.45	4.38	4.30
SD	.65	.54	.66	.66	.49	.38	.43	.46
Immigrant-Chinese (n= 46)								
M	3.19	4.32	4.09	4.26	3.05	4.52	4.08	4.28
SD	.51	.62	.67	.54	.52	.47	.53	.48
American (n= 48)								
M	2.54	4.52	3.71	3.88	2.36	4.60	3.92	3.69
SD	.58	.42	.51	.48	.44	.24	.41	.47

Note. Cont= Parental Control
Aff= Open Expression of Affection
Indp= Encouragement of Independence
Achv= Emphasis on Achievement